

ETERNAL FAMILY CHAPTER 17

**THE COMMAND TO MULTIPLY
AND REPLENISH THE EARTH**

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”

“It is a crowning privilege of a husband and wife who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for these spirit children of God. We believe in families, and we believe in children.

“When a child is born to a husband and wife, they are fulfilling part of our Heavenly Father’s plan to bring children to earth” (Neal L. Anderson, “Children,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 28).

Elder Mason had [an] experience just weeks after his marriage that helped him prioritize his family responsibilities. He said:

““Marie and I had rationalized that to get me through medical school it would be necessary for her to remain in the workplace. Although this was not what we [wanted] to do, children would have to come later. [While looking at a Church magazine at my parents’ home,] I saw an article by Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, [highlighting] responsibilities associated with marriage. According to Elder Kimball, one sacred responsibility was to multiply and replenish the earth. My parents’ home was [close to] the Church Administration Building. I immediately walked to the offices, and 30 minutes after reading his article, I found myself sitting across the desk from Elder Spencer W. Kimball.’ (This wouldn’t be so easy today.)

““I explained that I wanted to become a doctor. There was no alternative but to postpone having our family. Elder Kimball listened patiently and then responded in a soft voice, “Brother Mason, would the Lord want you to break one of his important commandments in order for you to become a doctor? With the help of the Lord, you can have your family and still become a doctor. Where is your faith?””

“Elder Mason continued: ‘Our first child was born less than a year later. Marie and I worked hard, and the Lord opened the windows of heaven.’ The Masons were blessed with two more children before he graduated from medical school four years later” (“Children,” 29).

“When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith” (“Children,” 28; italics added).

“How many children should a couple have? All they can care for! Of course, to care for children means more than simply giving them life. Children must be loved, nurtured, taught, fed, clothed, housed, and well started in their capacities to be good parents themselves” (Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75).

“The bearing of children can ... be a heartbreaking subject for righteous couples who marry and find that they are unable to have the children they so anxiously anticipated or for a husband and wife who plan on having a large family but are blessed with a smaller family.

“We cannot always explain the difficulties of our mortality. Sometimes life seems very unfair—especially when our greatest desire is to do exactly what the Lord has commanded. As the Lord’s servant, I assure you that this promise is certain: ‘Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, [as] they keep the covenants they have made with God’ [*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3]” (“Children,” 30).

“Human life is a sacred gift from God. Elective abortion for personal or social convenience is contrary to the will and the commandments of God. ... Latter-day prophets have denounced abortion, referring to the Lord’s declaration, ‘Thou shalt not ... kill, nor do anything like unto it’ (D&C 59:6). Their counsel on the matter is clear: Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must not submit to, perform, encourage, pay for, or arrange for an abortion. Church members who encourage an abortion in any way may be subject to Church discipline.

“Church leaders have said that some exceptional circumstances may justify an abortion, such as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth. But even these circumstances do not automatically justify an abortion. Those who face such circumstances should consider abortion only after consulting with their local Church leaders and receiving a confirmation through earnest prayer” (Gospel Topics, “Abortion,” [lds.org/topics](https://www.lds.org/topics)).

“We ... express our support of unwed parents who place their children for adoption in stable homes with a mother and a father. We also express our support of the married mothers and fathers who adopt these children.

“... Having a secure, nurturing, and consistent relationship with both a father and a mother is essential to a child’s well-being. When choosing adoption, unwed parents grant their children this most important blessing. Adoption is an unselfish, loving decision that blesses the child, birth parents, and adoptive parents in this life and throughout the eternities” (First Presidency statement, Oct. 4, 2006, as cited in *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 37).

